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marshall county

CONSERVATION AREA

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THE AREA

Marshall County Conservation Area, on the backwaters of the Illinois River 6 miles south of Lacon on Route 26, is in the heart of the mallard duck flyway. The 3,122-acre area, acquired in 1955, is a valuable link in the chain of refuges along the Illinois River.

Marshall County, on the east side of the river, is managed in conjunction with two other areas: Sparland Conservation Area, containing 1,280 acres and purchased in 1925 is located 6 miles northwest and Spring Branch Conservation Area, located directly across the river from Marshall County, consists of 1,542 acres purchased since 1953. Collectively the three areas are referred to as the Marshall Conservation Area and total 6,044 acres.

HISTORY

The Potawatomi Indians inhabited the area between Peoria and Ottawa. Their villages and chiefs included Chief Mucketepokee, better known as Black Partridge. Mucketepokee was a friend of the settlers until some of the Indians began raiding them. The settlers retaliated by wiping out the Chief's village while he was gone, killing 30 old men, women and children. Although Mucketepokee was not connected with any of the previous Indian raids, after his village was wiped out, he became a foe of the settlers and began waging raids on them. Peace was soon established, however, and he returned to this Big Spring Village where he died about 1820.

Trail: The Black Partridge Trail starts at the Marshall County Conservation Area and is dedicated to Mucketepokee, who was described as "tall and commanding in appearance with the eye of an eagle and noble in aspect."

NATURAL FEATURES

On the east side of Route 26 a high bluff contains heavy hardwood timber interspersed with wildflowers. Wildlife includes squirrel, deer, rabbit and quail. Songbirds, waterfowl and hawks are plentiful while eagles may be seen in the winter.

The area headquarters located 6 miles south of Lacon contains the refuge manager's residence and office, equipment maintenance buildings and a check station for waterfowl hunters and for deer hunters from Woodford, Putnam and Marshall counties. Forest game, upland game and waterfowl hunting are permitted in season. Waterfowl blinds are issued in a public drawing

prior to the season and if not claimed daily by the builder one hour before shooting time they are assigned by drawing. Waterfowl hunting stops at 12 noon and all hunters must then check in.

The picnic area, camping area (class B), parking area, water hydrants, sanitary dumping station and pit toilets are all near the headquarters office. The campground has 40 pads, most which have electricity. There are no concessions at Marshall.

The lake has about 10 miles of shoreline and contains largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie, bullhead, channel catfish and carp. The lake itself is closed to fishing during the waterfowl season but the ditch at the headquarters is open and is heavily used. There is a gravel launching ramp and boat rentals are available.

SPARLAND CONSERVATION AREA

Located just north of Sparland on the west side of the Illinois River, the Sparland Conservation area contains 1,280 acres of which 1,110 acres are water. There is one parking lot off of Route 29 used by fishermen and duck hunters but no other facilities are available. The area is predominantly used as a waterfowl hunting area and contains 18 blinds assigned by public drawing prior to the season. There is no check station for Sparland and the blinds are open to the public if the blind builder doesn't claim his blind one-half hour before shooting time. State rules and regulations apply.

The lake is very shallow and during low water boat access is difficult.

SPRING BRANCH CONSERVATION AREA

The Spring Branch Conservation Area is made up of four properties located on the west side of the Illinois River between Sparland and Chillicothe. Part of the area is in Marshall County and part is in Peoria County. Of the 1,642 total acres, 537 are water. The habitat ranges from upland forest to riverbottom forest to cropland. Upland game and forest game hunting is allowed on some of the area and the prospective hunter should check at the headquarters for information. There is one parking lot off Route 29 for the hunter.

The "brickyard" area, so named because it formerly was the home of the Hydraulic Press Brick Company, is popular with the fishermen who find the jetties reaching out from the shoreline an excellent spot to fish. A parking area and pit toilets are available but there is no drinking water. Future plans call for picnic areas, boat launch and security lights at this location.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION . . .

Admittance will not be granted groups of 25 or more persons to any state park or conservation area unless permission from the park ranger has been secured to use the facilities. It is also required that groups of minors have adequate supervision and that at least one responsible adult accompany each group not exceeding 15 minors. All pets must be on a leash.

Numerous state parks and memorials are within easy access of every part of the state. Lodges, cabins and dining rooms are important features of Illinois Beach, Starved Rock, Pere Marquette, White Pines Forest and Giant City. Reservations for lodging should be made with lodge managers.

All state parks are open the year round. When weather conditions necessitate the closing of park roads during freezing and thawing periods, access to park facilities is by foot only.

For more details on this site contact Marshall Conservation Area, Box 292, Lacon, Ill. 61540, Phone 309/246-8351. For information on other Illinois sites, write Department of Conservation, Information/Education Division, State Office Building, Springfield, Illinois 62706.

PARK MAPS

Route 29
Sparland Conservation Area
Entrance
Goose Lake
Sparland Conservation Area
Route 17
LACON
Waterfowl Rest Area
Sawyer Slough
Route 26
Waterfowl Rest Area
Illinois River Channel
Spring Branch Conservation Area
Waterfowl Rest Area
Meadow Lake
Babb Slough
Marshall County Conservation Area
Headquarters
Route 29
Lacon
Route 26
Marshall County
Ranger's Res.
Babb Slough
Office
Camping Area
Check Station
Boat Dock
Camping Area
Babb Slough
To Spring Bay